

# A WOMAN'S CONCERN

BY WENDY ALLEN

With a top-notch medical team and state-of-the-art technology, women receive the **best in breast healthcare** at SCMC



When San Clemente resident Jennifer Jackway found a lump in her underarm area, the mother of three knew that she wanted to act quickly to find a physician she could trust. Photograph by Faye Chapman.

**B**reast health is an important factor in the overall wellness of women. Annual mammogram screenings and breast self-exams play significant roles in breast health. Experts recommend that women over the age of 40 receive annual mammograms from a trusted healthcare practitioner.

South Coast Medical Center (SCMC) has a comprehensive team that facilitates breast screenings for patients, using full-field digital mammography. With this state-of-the-art technology, patients receive more comfort, improvement of detection and patient care, faster acquisition, enhanced images and 40 percent less radiation than with standard mammography.

In addition to mammography screenings, breast self-exams also play an important role in breast health. It is recommended that women

over the age of 20 perform a monthly breast self-exam to check for new lumps or other changes. While a self-exam is no substitute for a breast examination from a physician, it can play an important role in the early detection of lumps. Some 80 percent of breast lumps are benign (noncancerous) and may be caused by hormonal fluctuations, infections or medicines.

For women who find that their lumps are malignant, or cancerous, early detection is key to a successful outcome. In spite of the decrease in the number of patients afflicted, breast cancer is still the most common type of cancer in the U.S., next to skin cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, each year more than 200,000 women will receive this diagnosis. SCMC has first-rate breast surgeons on staff who go the extra mile for their patients in their fight against cancer.

## MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

Michael Coccia, M.D., FACS; Steven Chang, M.D., FACS; and Elvira Klause, M.D., FACS, are top-rated surgeons at SCMC who perform breast surgeries such as lumpectomies, mastectomies and biopsies. These accomplished physicians focus on the whole of each of their patients—the mind, body and spirit—and put together the most effective and aggressive treatment plans for each. They understand that it takes this kind of comprehensive approach to medicine to bring about the best results for their patients.

Dr. Coccia has been with SCMC for 18 years and is a general vascular surgeon. Considered a leader in his field, he understands that when patients come to see him, it is perhaps one of the most vulnerable times in their lives. “In our practice, we treat life-changing events,” says Dr. Coccia. “I know that when patients come through

## THE MINIMALLY INVASIVE BREAST BIOPSY



Karen Reuss, M.D.

In some cases, physicians may not be able to ascertain from traditional imaging whether a lump is benign or malignant. In these situations, it may be necessary to obtain a tissue sample. As an alternative to open surgical biopsy, there are a few minimally invasive breast biopsy procedures used to obtain a sample. These procedures are typically performed with the combined use of ultrasound, mammography and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Orange County residents are fortunate to have the services of Karen Reuss, M.D., a board-certified, radiologist specializing in both women's imaging and interventional radiology. With more than 15 years of experience, she has extensive knowledge of performing breast biopsy procedures, while providing patients with sensitivity and expert care. “I am committed to providing patients with the very best in patient care,” Dr. Reuss says. Dr. Reuss attended medical school at State University of New York Health Science Center in Syracuse, N.Y.; completed her residency training in Diagnostic Radiology at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac, Mich.; and completed her fellowship in Body Imaging and Interventional Radiology at the University of California School of Medicine, in Irvine, Calif.

our doors, they are often scared and confused. We try to provide high-quality surgical services in a caring, compassionate environment.”

Dr. Coccia co-founded the Surgical Group of South Laguna with Dr. Chang, who has been on staff at the Laguna Beach-based hospital for 10 years. Diplomates of the American Board of Surgery, Dr. Coccia and Dr. Chang perform a wide array of surgeries, including abdominal surgery, endocrine surgery, peripheral vascular surgery, as well as minimally invasive surgeries.

Dr. Klause is new to SCMC, and like Drs. Coccia and Chang, is a Diplomate of the American Board of Surgery. Dr. Klause is an experienced surgeon who is a valuable asset to the hospital's medical staff. In addition to breast surgeries, she also performs general surgeries such as hernia and hemorrhoid procedures and gallbladder surgery.

As one of the only female breast surgeons at the Laguna Beach-based hospital, Dr. Klause is uniquely positioned to understand the needs of her female patients. “Some women have a higher comfort level with female physicians,” Dr. Klause says.

## THE RIGHT FIT

SCMC's surgeons have performed breast surgeries for thousands of women, including San Clemente resident Jennifer Jackway.

At the beginning of 2008, Jackway found a lump in her underarm area. Her primary care physician sent her for a mammogram. The results, however, were inconclusive. Not wanting to let too much time pass, Jackway's doctor suggested she get examined by a breast surgeon. Now it was time for her to find just the right physician.

Jackway called her insurance company and gave it a set of criteria to follow. She knew

that her choice for a physician would be one of the most important decisions with this whole process. She asked for a physician who was particularly skilled in the area of breast surgery and also an accomplished surgeon in other areas. In addition, Jackway wanted to be sure that this surgeon was board-certified. Taking in all of Jackway's requirements, the insurance company recommended Dr. Coccia.

“I was immediately comfortable with Dr. Coccia,” said Jackway. “He's ultraprofessional and he is exactly the kind of doctor you want. Right away I could tell I'd be safe with him.”

Dr. Coccia ordered a breast MRI, or magnetic resonance imaging, which offers valuable information about many breast conditions that cannot be obtained by other imaging methods such as mammography or ultrasound. Jackway's breast MRI results showed a 1.2-centimeter growth near the nipple.

Because Dr. Coccia strives to be as thorough with his treatment as possible, he felt surgery should be the next step. Says Jackway, “Dr. Coccia called me and said, ‘Because of your family history, let's do a biopsy and take it out now.’”

Jackway agreed, but her husband, Bryan, was against the surgery. She asked him to meet with Dr. Coccia, the doctor she had come to trust so much. Dr. Coccia immediately reassured him, answering all of Bryan's questions. A week later Jackway underwent open biopsy surgery.

## THE RESULTS

After waiting a short time, Jackway—the mother of three daughters, ages 14, 12 and 9—learned that her lump was benign. “I am unbelievably thankful for Dr. Coccia's impeccable skills. Also, I can't believe what a wonderful job he did with my incision closure. When I took off my bandage, I couldn't even tell where the incision had been.”

“I am very picky when it comes to how I close a surgery,” Dr. Coccia says. “I do everything I can to ensure that my patients aren't left with a scar or if they are, it's minimal.”

Jackway also praises South Coast's nursing staff. “Not only are the nurses complete professionals, but they also showed me such wonderful care. I recommend SCMC and Dr. Coccia to everyone who wants the best in a surgeon and the best in a hospital.”

Jackway's story had a happy ending. There will be many other patients, however, who will have more challenging circumstances. Thankfully for them, they will have the services of Dr. Coccia, Dr. Chang, Dr. Klause and SCMC to guide them through their journeys. ❄

# MEET THE TEAM

## DR. MICHAEL COCCIA

completed his medical school training at Ohio State University. His internship training took place at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, and he completed his residency training at the University of California, Irvine.



## DR. STEVEN CHANG

completed his medical school training at New York University School of Medicine. His internship and residency were completed at Thomas Jefferson University Medical Center in Philadelphia.



## The Surgical Group of South Laguna

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Most forms of insurance accepted.

## DR. ELVIRA KLAUSE

is a Clinical Preceptor for Western University of Health Sciences. She completed her medical school training at the University of Missouri at Columbia. Her internship and residency were completed at Martin Luther King Hospital in Los Angeles. In addition, she completed a fellowship in trauma surgery and critical care at Martin Luther King Hospital.



## Elvira Klause, M.D., FACS

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## BREAST CANCER SUPPORT SERVICES

Breast cancer patients at SCMC walk through their treatment, from start to finish, with the comforting support of cancer nurse Jan Simpson, R.N. Simpson is the hospital's breast care coordinator and orchestrates the treatment and care for all newly diagnosed and recurrent breast cancer patients. For more information, contact Simpson at **949-499-7592**.

To schedule your routine breast screening, contact Radiology Scheduling at **949-499-7545**.